

Recent Biblical Archaeology.

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IN the excavations which Messrs. G. and A. Horsfield have recently made at Sela-Petra in ancient Edom they succeeded in opening up the tomb of the Triple Dushara, which is a Nabatæan complex of three chambers dating from the first century A.D. It was found that the burials in these chambers had been carried out in quicklime, the bodies being entirely calcined in consequence. The discovery affords an excellent commentary on Am 2¹, where the prophet pronounces a curse on Moab because 'he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime.' This outrage must have taken place at some time when Israel and Edom were allied against Moab (cf. 2 K 3⁵⁻⁹), and it was regarded by the prophet as an act of impiety. According to primitive Semitic belief, the human body was so identified with the *nephesh* or soul that to burn the one was to destroy the other (cf. 2 K 23¹⁶). On the red sand which covered these Dushara tombs being removed, a layer of white quicklime was found; and on this being broken into, only friable calcined bones appeared amid a quantity of black dust, with a second layer of lime underneath. This method of burial, which is employed at the present day in Britain for disposing of the bodies of condemned felons, must have been an ancient Edomite custom going back at least to the time of Amos (c. 760 B.C.), and evidently lingering on among the Nabatæans, many of whom had doubtless married Edomite wives and continued Edomite traditions. It was probably confined to people of rank, such as priests and kings, and must have been unique in antiquity.

We have referred in previous articles to the influence exercised by the Hurrians on the characteristics and early history of the Hebrews. The Hurrians were a Highland race from the Caucasus regions who made a powerful and widespread push southward into the Euphrates district (the Fertile Crescent of the Semites) about 2000 B.C., or perhaps earlier. They settled in large numbers in Mesopotamia, particularly in Nuzi (modern *Yorgha Tepe*) and Arrapha (modern *Kirkûk*), and formed the main population of the Mitanni nation (c. 1400 B.C.) in Aram-Naharaim (Egyptian *Naharina*), in the region between the Tigris and the Euphrates. They spread westward into Palestine to such an extent that the Egyptians, beginning with the

XVIIIth Dynasty (c. 1580 B.C.), regularly called the land Huru, and they are frequently mentioned in the Biblical records under the name *Hôri* (cuneiform *Hurru*). Discoveries are showing more and more that their influence on the Hebrews, through racial intermixture, social custom, and other circumstances, must have been considerable. Hurrian tablets from Nuzi, numbering about 1100 and dating from about 1475 to 1350 B.C., continue to shed much light on the Patriarchal period and illustrate many an obscure passage in Judges or Samuel.

Professor E. A. Speiser has drawn attention to the fact that the Hurrian dialect helps us to rectify an erroneous phrase in 1 S 1²⁴. According to this verse, Hannah, when she went with Samuel to Shiloh, took with her 'three bullocks' (פָּרִים שְׁלֹשָׁה). The occurrence of the numeral after the noun is unusual in Hebrew, and only one bullock moreover is mentioned in the next verse. Hurrian linguistic usage, however, goes to show that the correct translation should be 'a three-year-old bullock' (פָּרִי מִשְׁלֹשָׁה), as in the margin of the Revised Version, and in the Greek and Syriac manuscripts. The copyist, living in later times, has thus divided the Hebrew text wrongly, probably because by his day the use of a number to denote age (as in Gn 15⁹, cf. also a cognate use in Ec 4¹², Ezk 42⁶) had become somewhat obscure and this Hurrian idiom was unknown to him or did not occur to him. That 'three-year-old' is the correct rendering is evident also from the fact that animals suitable for religious purposes had to be of a certain economic and legal standard. We find from the Hittite Code that the minimum age of bulls in such cases was at least two years, and Hannah's choice of a three-year-old one was thus in harmony with the background of her times as well as with time-honoured tradition (cf. the instruction to Abraham, Gn 15⁹).

From the Nuzi tablets we gather that among the Hurrians a man's cloak or outer apparel was supposed to convey with it some charm or efficacy from the owner. Mlle Cassin, in a recent volume on the tablets, quotes several cases of this, where the cloak was identified with his person in some magical or mysterious way, and imbued with his virtues. Probably it is in accordance with such a conception—which was not confined to the Hurrians but was

common throughout the East—that we are to interpret the reference to the mantle of Elijah (2 K 2⁸, 13-15) and the robe of Saul (1 S 24⁴⁻⁶, 11), and such expressions as ‘robe of righteousness,’ ‘garments of salvation’ (Is 61¹⁰), ‘of vengeance’ (59¹⁷), etc. We have an example of the same idea in the case of the afflicted woman who considered the vesture of Jesus as possessed of mysterious healing virtue (Lk 8⁴⁴). The belief also underlies the narrative of Ac 19¹², where we read of handkerchiefs and aprons, which had been brought into contact with Paul’s person, being used to cure the diseased and to expel demons.

Many scholars are coming to believe that the Hebrew language embodies numerous Hurrian words, and that several well-known geographical and personal names in the Old Testament belong to this category. Julius Lewy, in a recent description of Hurrian influences on Israel, has given a long list of such names. Thus, he traces ‘Canaan’ (cuneiform *Kina-ḫi*, etc.) to a Hurrian word *Kina* or *Kana* meaning a ‘reed’ (the *ḫi* being a common Hurrian suffix). The ‘Land of Canaan’ would thus correspond, he thinks, to the expression *mḏbr spm* (‘desert of reeds’) in the Ras Shamra tablets, *i.e.* the southern regions from Gaza or thereabouts as far as the Red Sea (‘Sea of Reeds’). He would trace ‘Yahweh’ to the ancient Hurrian word *Ya* (‘God’), with the addition of two suffixes (*Ya+ha+wa*), while he would regard ‘Elohim’ as simply a Semitic translation of this. ‘Judah,’ he takes to be the Divine name with suffix *-da*. Similarly, he gives a Hurrian origin to such Biblical names as Sinai, Barzillai, El Shaddai, Talmi, Behemoth, Leviathan, Moses, Gershom, Miriam, Midian, Hobab, Jericho, Pharpar, and others. Whether the derivation suggested in such cases is correct is, to say the least, rather doubtful, but there can be no question that the Hurrians exerted an abiding influence upon the early Hebrews. They are known to have occupied Aram, with which the Hebrew race had ancient connexions, and it is not improbable that large numbers of them were included in the Hebrew tribes under the leadership of Moses.

Schaeffer, in his last report on excavations at Ras Shamra (Ugarit), draws attention to the fact that, beneath the floors of many of the houses in the earlier level, there are underground chambers used for many generations as burial places. This proximity of the dead to the living was not confined to Syria, but was common throughout the ancient world. It was not unknown among the Israelites, but seems to have been regarded by them as an excep-

tional honour reserved for kings, prophets, and other outstanding personages (cf. 1 S 25¹, 1 K 2³⁴, 2 K 21¹⁸, 2 Ch 33²⁰), though infants, too—not necessarily those only that were sacrificed—were sometimes buried below the floors of the rooms in pottery jars, as we know was done at Jericho. In connexion with Ras Shamra, H. L. Ginsberg has drawn attention to the fact that the word *kōsharōth* (כֹּשָׁרוֹת), which occurs frequently in the tablets and is supposed to signify ‘lunar goddesses,’ probably means ‘(female) singers.’ The word occurs in Ps 68⁶, where it is translated ‘prosperity’ (Revised Version), but if we accept Ginsberg’s view the correct meaning here would be ‘song,’ ‘music,’ or the like (‘He bringeth out the prisoners into song,’ *i.e.* into ‘rejoicing’).

Reports from Gordon Loud, Field Director of the excavations at Megiddo, give us many new revelations of this powerful stronghold, which commanded the main road through Palestine from Egypt to Asia, and is referred to so often in the Old Testament. The site has now been cleared to bedrock, where the first inhabitants made their homes, many of them in cave dwellings. A pavement dating from the last half of the fourth millennium has been found sloping downward toward the edge of the mound. Upon many of its stones there are interesting incised drawings of human and animal forms—a veritable picture gallery of art, more than five thousand years old. But perhaps the most important discovery has been the massive city wall, built probably about 2500 B.C., and made of colossal masonry suggestive of the one at Ai. It had an original width of over thirteen feet, which was subsequently doubled, and when found it was still standing to a height of eleven and a half feet. Need we wonder at the report of the spies, ‘The cities are great and walled up to heaven’ (Dt 1²⁸)?

In our last article we described the results of excavations at Ezion-geber (*Tell el-Kheleifeh*), from which Solomon’s Tarshish-ships sailed to Ophir. The question has been discussed as to why the builders did not choose a site farther west, near Mrashrash, or farther east as the Nabatæans did at Aila. But Professor Glueck points out that for several miles on the west no sweet water is obtainable for drinking purposes. It is only at *Tell el-Kheleifeh* that the wells begin, with a line of them running eastward not far from the seashore; and there is no reason to believe that the sub-soil conditions have changed much since Solomon’s day. As for placing the port farther east, the copper-refining furnaces, which required a powerful current of wind, would have missed the prevailing one from

the north, which sweeps down the Arabah at this spot as if driven through a funnel. Among the discoveries at Ezion-geber may be mentioned the numerous stamped jar-handles, twelve of which are marked with seal impressions dating from the seventh or eighth century B.C. The inscription, which is the same on all of them, reads, 'Belonging to Kôs-anal, servant of the king.' Kôs (or Kaus) was the name of the chief Edomite deity, and occurs in numerous theophorous compounds, including some in the Old Testament—cf. Bar-kôs ('son of Kôs,' Ezr 2⁵³, Neh 7⁶⁵) and Kushaiah (1 Ch 15¹⁷, where the sibilant is wrong). It seems as if the god Kôs was once known in Israel, but if so he must have been eliminated later on as successfully as Hadad. Outside the Bible, the name has been found in Egyptian compounds, notably in Memphis (c. 200-150 B.C.), and in Assyrian transcriptions of the names of some Edomite kings.

There has just been added to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, U.S.A., an amber statuette of Ashur-Nasir-Apal, king of Assyria in the ninth century B.C., which is believed to have been found in the mound of Kalhu beside the Tigris, and which seems to be similar to the stone one of the same king in the British Museum. The importance of the figure lies in the fact that the king is depicted as wearing a gold breastplate almost identical with the one worn by the Biblical high-priest, as described in Ex 28¹⁵⁻³⁰. We thus have excellent proof that Semitic kings in ancient times regarded themselves as vice-regents of God on earth, and acted as priests or mediators between God and man. The kings of Lagash, for instance, as far back as 2700 B.C., were the only official priests there, and in Abraham's time Jerusalem was ruled by Melchizedek, a priest-king. It was only when a State grew large and became more complex, and the king's duties consequently more numerous and varied, that he delegated some of these, especially the religious ones, to deputies to act in his stead. In this way professional priests arose, though at first they functioned only in the name of the king. By and by, as they increased in number, they formed organized bodies, and ultimately became distinct from royalty. It was different in the case of the Israelites, for among them the priesthood had a special origin, probably of a tribal nature (Levitical). The breastplate, however, worn by its chief functionary, was evidently modelled on that of ancient kings, though it seems to have been larger, for it had four rows of jewels (one more than on the statuette referred to), but in both cases there were three jewels in each row.

The similarity which we have just mentioned is only one of hundreds which show how customs, rites, ceremonies, religious observances, and the like were spread over wide areas. Evidence is continually being discovered of the close relationship between East and West as far back, indeed, as the days of Abraham (c. 2000 B.C.). There were not only commercial transactions over enormous distances, but artistic and other connexions. Mesopotamia transmitted its works of art far westward, beyond the shores of Palestine. At the Palace of Knossos in Crete Sir Arthur Evans has unearthed some bull-shaped libation vessels, a lapis-lazuli cylinder, and other objects of Chaldean pedigree. The diplomatic correspondence found in the archives of Mari on the Euphrates shows that this city was in active communication not only with Ras Shamra (Ugarit), Byblos (*Gublâ*), and Cyprus (*Alashia*), but with the islands of the Ægean. On the other hand, Crete, as far back as the Middle Minoan Period (eighteenth century B.C.), exported its artistic wares eastward not only to Egypt, but to Palestine, Mesopotamia, and far beyond.

The Ras Shamra discoveries show that Cretan merchants were installed at Ugarit at this early epoch, and Cretan vases, beautifully painted, and various other objects of art, were numerous there. A vase of fine 'egg-shell' fabric, in pure polychrome style, dating from the twentieth century B.C., and clearly the work of some Palace *atelier* at Knossos, was recently found by Schaeffer in one of the tombs. Ægean architecture, too, was prominent in the construction of many of the burial chambers, particularly those of rectangular shape with dry-stone walls inclined towards the top and roofed with slabs. At Tell Atchana also, on the Middle Orontes, beyond the Amanus range, painted sherds, dating from about 1700 B.C., with decorative motives indicative of a direct Minoan origin, have been found by Sir Leonard Woolley. These and other discoveries point to a flourishing civilization in the age of Abraham, with thriving busy ports on the Syrian coast and round the Mediterranean. At the time when this Patriarch and his Habiru clans were leaving Haran for Canaan, the world, as then known, was closely united in merchandise, art, and other ways. As much was being done by diplomacy as by conquest, and diplomacy in those far-off days was already a fine art. Letters, courteous, tactful, but firm, passed from ruler to ruler over large stretches. Unfortunately, the Biblical records give us no hint of all this, and we have to fill in the background ourselves.